Special trains are also run by Railways on Full Tariff Rates as per specific request made by a party.

Requests for special trains are received at various levels *i.e* Station, Division, Zonal and Railway Board and necessary action as found operationally feasible and commercially justified is taken. No compendium of statistics for such requests is maintained.

Ship-breaking at Alang

*340. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the ship-breaking facility at Alang is still functional despite complaints of occupational and environmental hazards involved in ship breaking by semi-skilled or unskilled labourers in unprotected working environment;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that yet another ship was recently brought to Alang; and

(d) if so, the steps taken by Government regarding the said ship?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI VIRBHADRA SINGH): (a) and (b) Ship breaking activities are undertaken at Alang and the operational procedures are being followed as per the directions issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. As per the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of 17.02.2006, a Central Technical Committee (CTC) under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests was set up to regulate various activities of ship breaking industries. The CTC gave its recommendations touching all aspects of ship breaking. The recommendations are operative by virtue of the Supreme Court Order dated 6-9-2007. Pursuant to the directives of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, a series of measures have been taken for attenuating the hazards of ship breaking and for improving the working conditions at ship-breaking yards. Consequently, detailed protocols and procedures have been put in place for scrutinizing ships arriving for breaking and for handling and disposing of hazardous materials and wastes. The provisions of existing rules take adequate care of the hazards of ship breaking. Further, as and when any shortcomings are noticed, remedial steps are taken.

(c) and (d) A passenger ship "Platinum-II" was anchored at Bhavnagar Anchoring Point on 6.10.2009 with the permission of the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB). The Union Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) had constituted a Central Technical Team to inspect and examine the ship, since it was alleged that the ship was carrying hazardous materials. The team inspected the ship and submitted its report on 26th October, 2009. As per the report, there are no hazardous and radio-active materials on board the ship in loose form or as cargo. However, hazardous materials like asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and radio-active materials are present in the ship as part of its structure.

2. It has been brought to the notice of the MoEF that the ship has violated the United States Toxic Substances Control Act (USTSCA) and an order has been passed, by the United States Environment Protection Authority (USEPA) against the owners of the ship. There were also allegations that the ship has been brought into India with a falsified flag and registry.

3. Keeping in view the "Precautionary Principle", the MoEF has communicated to GMB that granting permission for beaching and breaking purpose of the ship will not be advisable.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Swaminathan Commission for Restructuring of Commodity Boards

2462. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL:

SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether M.S. Swaminathan Commission has recommended restructuring of various commodity boards so that they can be better catalyst for the productivity and quality; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) No such recommendation has been made by the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) set up under the chairmanship of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan. However, in the context of conservation, cultivation and marketing of medicinal plants, it made a recommendation for mandating different commodity boards for promoting intercropping with plantation crops like coffee, rubber, spices and coconut.

Miserable condition of farmers of Bundelkhand

†2463. SHRI GANGA CHARAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of amount of loans waived off by Government for drought hit farmers of Vidarbha;

(b) the measures being taken by Government to improve the plight of farmers there;

(c) whether Government is working on a plan for waiver of loans given to the farmers of Bundelkhand facing drought for the last five years; and

(d) the efforts being made by Government to improve the plight of farmers of Bundelkhand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI K.V. THOMAS): (a) An amount of Rs. 1235.80 crore was provided towards Debt Waiver for the farmers of Vidarbha under Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008 of Union Government. Apart from this, an amount of Rs. 457.58 crore was also provided to the farmers of Vidarbha under Agricultural Debt Waiver & Debt Relief Scheme, 2009 of Govt. of Maharashtra.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.